

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Certificate of Appropriateness
BZH-27901

Date: December 10, 2013

Applicant: Midwest Window Systems, LLC

Address of Property: 1721 University Avenue Southeast

Project Name: Window replacement

Contact Person and Phone: Denis Sipe, 612-889-1953

CPED Staff and Phone: John Smoley, Ph.D., 612-673-2830

**Date Application
Deemed Complete:** October 7, 2013

Appeal Period Expiration: December 20, 2012

End of 60-Day Decision Period: December 6, 2013

End of 120-Day Decision Period: February 4, 2014

Ward: 2

Neighborhood Organization: Marcy Holmes Neighborhood Association

Proposed Use: Multiple-family dwelling

Concurrent Review: n/a

BACKGROUND:

In 2003 the City Council designated this property as a contributing resource in the University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House Historic District. The district is historically significant for its association with the emergence of a thriving Greek letter system and the tremendous growth and prosperity of the University during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Recognized as well for their highly symbolic, architecturally distinctive twentieth 20th century designs, the Fraternity and Sorority Row houses defined the northern edge of the campus. During the period of significance, from 1907 to 1930, a total of twenty-two chapter houses on Fraternity Row and eleven chapter houses on Sorority Row which were built still retain a fair level of historic integrity.

In November 2012 the Heritage Preservation Commission approved the rehabilitation of the rear wing of the building, to include the replacement of deteriorated non-historic aluminum windows with aluminum-clad wood windows.

DESCRIPTION:

The subject property is a multiple-family residence located mid-block on University Avenue Southeast between 17th and 18th Avenues Southeast (Attachment 1) on the northeastern side of the street.

This vaguely Beaux Arts, three-story, stucco-clad building has a flat roof behind a peaked parapet. A raised terrace at ground level is faced in limestone. The north, rear elevation is clad in painted common brick.

This building is a contributing property in the University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House Historic District. 1721 University Avenue Southeast is the second oldest chapter house remaining on University Avenue and at the University of Minnesota. Despite alterations to the stucco and entry, it still exemplifies the scale and style of the pre-World War I period. This building followed the Chi Psi (1897; razed) Delta Kappa Epsilon (1906; razed) and Phi Kappa Psi (1907) chapter houses constructed on Fraternity Row, and its style reflects the early twentieth century preference for columned facades.

The Phi Upsilon chapter was founded at Union College in 1833 and at the University of Minnesota in 1891. Prior to the construction of this building, the chapter was at 1312 7th Street Southeast. By 1940 the chapter moved into the former Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity house at 1617 University Avenue, and appears to have been inactive by 1949. The building has since been used for private student housing.

PROPOSED CHANGES:

The applicant wishes to:

1. replace fifty-five windows on the building in their existing rough openings (page 16), avoiding:
 - a) the eight remaining fixed wood windows on the building (four on the southern elevation, two on the western elevation, and two on the eastern elevation) which still bear historic X-shaped muntins;
 - b) two lower level (basement) windows, one on the eastern elevation and one on the western elevation, that have been filled in with mechanical equipment vents; and
 - c) the recently replaced windows on the one-story rear addition.

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2. install screens on proposed street-side (southern elevation) replacement windows (page 152); and
3. install aluminum panning over historic wood window trim evident on all replacement window openings (page 150-153).

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Staff has received no public comment on the project.

Findings as required by the Minneapolis Preservation Code:

The Planning Division of the Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department has analyzed the application based on the findings required by the Minneapolis Preservation Ordinance. Before approving a certificate of appropriateness, and based upon the evidence presented in each application submitted, the commission shall make findings based upon, but not limited to, the following:

(1) The alteration is compatible with and continues to support the criteria of significance and period of significance for which the landmark or historic district was designated.

Regardless of what changes are made to the subject property, it will maintain its historical significance, but proposed changes may affect its integrity (i.e. the property's ability to communicate its historical significance), as discussed in finding #3 below.

(2) The alteration is compatible with and supports the interior and/or exterior designation in which the property was designated.

The exterior portions of the building communicate the building's significance. The building is significant for its Beaux Arts-influenced architectural style and its association with the strength of the Greek letter system at the University of Minnesota during the first three decades of the twentieth century.

The applicant proposes to replace six historic 1/1 wood-frame windows and all of the building's non-historic aluminum-frame windows with aluminum-clad wood windows and Fibrex (wood-plastic composite) windows. The applicant also proposes to cover historic wood window trim, evident on all window openings, with aluminum panning.

The 1/1 wood-frame windows are deteriorated (page 17-31). While they could likely be repaired, there are relatively few of them left on the building, following the replacement of the majority of the wood-frame windows on the building with aluminum-frame windows sometime prior to designation. The applicant is proposing to retain the eight remaining fixed wood windows on the building (four on the southern elevation, two on the western elevation, and two on the eastern elevation) which still bear historic X-shaped muntins (page 16). Nevertheless, differences in the materials, profile, component sizes, division of lights, installation depth, and presence of screens between the proposed and existing windows and window trim are too great for them to be considered compatible replacements (page 150-151). With the conditions recommended in this report, however, staff believes the project will be compatible with the property's designation.

(3) The alteration is compatible with and will ensure continued integrity of the landmark or historic district for which the district was designated.

The proposed work will impair the integrity of the property by covering and replacing historic features with new features whose differences in materials, profile, component sizes, division of lights, installation depth, and presence of screens will mar the property's integrity of materials, design, and workmanship. With the conditions recommended in this report, however, staff believes the project will not mar the property's integrity.

(4) *The alteration will not materially impair the significance and integrity of the landmark, historic district or nominated property under interim protection as evidenced by the consistency of alterations with the applicable design guidelines adopted by the commission.*

The applicant wishes to:

1. replace fifty-five windows on the building in their existing rough openings (page 16), avoiding:
 - a) the eight remaining fixed wood windows on the building (four on the southern elevation, two on the western elevation, and two on the eastern elevation) which still bear historic X-shaped muntins;
 - b) two lower level (basement) windows, one on the eastern elevation and one on the western elevation, that have been filled in with mechanical equipment vents; and
 - c) the recently replaced windows on the one-story rear addition.
2. install screens on proposed street-side (southern elevation) replacement windows (page 152); and
3. install aluminum panning over historic wood window trim evident on all replacement window openings (page 150-153).

The proposal does meet some window guidelines required by the *University of Minnesota Greek Letter Chapter House Historic District Design Guidelines*:

- ✓ All existing historic window openings should be retained, and window openings should not be enlarged or reduced to fit new units.
- ✓ New window openings should not be introduced into principal elevations.
- ✓ Windows should not be removed or permanently blocked for the installation of air conditioners.
- ✓ In most cases, new casement units are not appropriate replacements for double-hung units.
- ✓ Where egress or other safety issues exist, the division of lights in new casements should be compatible with historic models.
- ✓ In the case of modernized sash, repair of broken glass does not require complete replacement with historically appropriate units. Glazing in modernized units may be repaired with similar treatments. However, if complete sash replacement is needed, or there are a significant number of units to be replaced, historically appropriate units should be selected.
- ✓ If historic sash requires replacement, the size and division of lights in each sash should not be altered.

The applicant proposes to replace mostly non-historic windows in the existing rough openings of those windows, retaining historic trim, in compliance with these guidelines. The applicant proposes to replace six historic single-hung wood-frame windows, four on the east elevation and two on the west elevation, but these are a distinct minority of existing windows, and the applicant also proposes to retain eight historic fixed wood-frame windows.

Unfortunately, a number of other historic district guidelines are not met by the proposal:

- ✓ All decorative trim around the windows should be retained, including brick or terra cotta detail, wood or stone lintels, pediments, and hoods. If replacement is necessary the original shape and profile should be replicated.

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While the decorative wood trim around the windows will be preserved, it is proposed to be wrapped in aluminum panning (page 150-153). The depth and detail of the trim will be lost when covered by flat metal. Staff recommends that the project be conditioned to permit the trim to be replaced in kind if significant deterioration exists in the trim, but not be covered with flat aluminum panning.

- ✓ New windows should be compatible with existing historic units.

While the proposed aluminum panning will obscure detail apparent in the wood window trim, the Fibrex windows proposed to be installed on three sides of the building will introduce nonhistoric details; specifically, a stepped sill that differs dramatically from the flat, sloped sill on the historic 1/1 windows left on the building (page 151 and 153).

The proposed window frames, stiles, and rails are substantially thicker, reducing the width and height of glass panes in each 1/1 window as follows (page 150-151):

Replacement Feature	Width Difference of Glazing	Height Difference of Glazing
Aluminum-clad wood windows (proposed for the street-side)	1 1/8" decrease	2 1/2" decrease
Fibrex windows (proposed for non-street sides)	1 3/4" decrease	2 3/4" decrease

While the proposed replacement windows have wider components than their historic counterparts, the screens proposed to be placed over street-side windows have slimmer meeting rails, and likely (since it is not indicated) have slimmer stiles also (page 152). Staff recommends the proposed screens be conditioned to have rail widths, stile widths, and colors that match those of the historic windows.

Additionally, the proposed windows will be installed at lesser depths than the existing windows on the front of the building and greater depths on the sides and rear (page 150-151):

Replacement Feature	Installation Depth Difference
Aluminum-clad wood windows (proposed for the street-side)	5/16" shallower (1 5/16" shallower with proposed screens)
Fibrex windows (proposed for non-street sides)	7/8" deeper

The proposed windows will be aluminum-clad wood and Fibrex. Neither window material was in use during the district's period of significance, though wood- and steel- frame windows were.

- ✓ New sash, if installed, should duplicate the existing or other appropriate historic models, including the division of lights.

The applicant proposes to install windows with no X-shaped muntins in upper sashes on southern elevation (street-side) windows, despite the fact that photos depict X-shaped muntins in the upper sashes of the historic wood-frame windows (Attachment 3) on the southern elevation (page 157-158). In the absence of evidence that the X-shaped muntins existed on side and rear windows, a simple 1/1 division of lights is appropriate in those locations. Ideally, replacement windows on the front of the building would match the design and materials of the historic windows that once stood onsite. At a minimum,

these front façade windows should replicate the dimensions of the historic wood windows. They do neither. Aluminum-clad wood windows approved for use in the rear addition in November 2012 (page 159) met these standards apart from including X-shaped muntins (since no evidence regarding their existence in those locations was found). Staff recommends the project be conditioned to require installation of these previously approved windows or windows whose components match the sizes of those in the historic 1/1 wood-frame windows proposed for replacement on all four sides of the building.

- ✓ Replacement sash may be wood or metal with a painted or baked enamel finish. Vinyl is not acceptable.

While the applicant proposes to use aluminum-clad wood windows on the front of the building, replacement windows on the remaining sides of the building will be made of Fibrex: a wood-plastic composite not available during the building's period of significance (page 90-100).

- ✓ Glazing should be clear unless historical documentation shows other treatments. Low E and other energy-efficient glazing is acceptable.

Both window specifications sheets indicate that a variety of window glass coatings are available, but they do not indicate the clarity of these options. For clarity's sake, staff recommends that the project be conditioned to ensure glazing is clear. The proposed aluminum-clad wood windows will bring screens to windows on the front of the building, darkening the appearance of the opening, but screens can help prevent accidental falls, so their use should not be prohibited outright.

Aluminum-clad wood windows approved for use in the rear addition in November 2012 met these standards (page 159). Staff recommends the project be conditioned to install these previously-approved windows or windows whose components match the sizes of those in the historic 1/1 wood-frame windows proposed for replacement.

(5) The alteration will not materially impair the significance and integrity of the landmark, historic district or nominated property under interim protection as evidenced by the consistency of alterations with the recommendations contained in The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

The applicant is conducting a rehabilitation of the subject property. The proposed project does not follow the rehabilitation guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Replace deteriorated non-historic aluminum windows and historic wood frame windows with aluminum-clad wood windows and Fibrex windows and install screens on proposed street-side (southern elevation) replacement windows

The rehabilitation guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* recommend identifying retaining, and preserving windows—and their functional and decorative features—that are important in defining the overall historic character of the building. The applicant is proposing to preserve all historic fixed wood windows but replace all deteriorated historic 1/1 wood-frame windows (page 16). The vast majority of 1/1 historic wood-frame windows were previously replaced. Replacing the remaining few historic 1/1 wood-frame windows, which solely exist

in the lower (basement) level at the sides of the property will not damage the building's ability to communicate its historical significance.

The rehabilitation guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* recommend designing and installing new windows when the historic windows (frames, sash and glazing) are completely missing. The replacement windows may be an accurate restoration using historical, pictorial, and physical documentation; or be a new design that is compatible with the window openings and the historic character of the building. Historical photographs of the property reveal the fenestration pattern on the front of the building only, where fixed windows and the top sash of single- or double-hung windows bore X-shaped muntins (page 157-158). The applicant is proposing to replicate the 1/1 fenestration pattern of the nonhistoric windows which cover the rear wing and the remainder of the building. In the absence of evidence that the X-shaped muntins existed on side and rear windows, a simple 1/1 division of lights is appropriate. Ideally, replacement windows on the front of the building would match the design and materials of the historic windows that once stood onsite. At a minimum, these front façade windows should replicate the dimensions of the historic wood windows. They do neither. Aluminum-clad wood windows approved for use in the rear addition in November 2012 (page 159) met these standards apart from including X-shaped muntins (since no evidence regarding their existence in those locations was found). Staff recommends the project be conditioned to require installation of these previously approved windows or windows whose components match the sizes of those in the historic 1/1 wood-frame windows proposed for replacement on all four sides of the building.

The rehabilitation guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* do not recommend changing the number, location, size or glazing pattern of windows, through cutting new openings, blocking-in windows, and installing replacement sash that do not fit the historic window opening. The applicant is proposing to install rectangular windows in arched rough openings at the rear of the building (page 156). This is the condition that has existed since prior to the district's designation. While replacement windows at the rear of the building should fit the entire arched rough openings without using a transom panel to accommodate rectangular sashes, the rear of the building is least visible from the public right of way, and could continue to accommodate these changes with minimal impact on the property's integrity.

Install aluminum panning over historic wood window trim evident on all replacement window openings

The rehabilitation guidelines of *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* recommend replacing in kind an entire wood feature that is too deteriorated to repair—if the overall form and detailing are still evident—using the physical evidence as a model to reproduce the feature. While the decorative wood trim around the windows will be preserved, it is proposed to be wrapped in aluminum panning (page 150-153). The depth and detail of the trim will be lost when covered by flat metal (page 17-31). Staff recommends that the project be conditioned to permit the trim to be replaced in kind if significant deterioration exists in the trim, but not be covered with flat aluminum panning.

(6) *The certificate of appropriateness conforms to all applicable regulations of this preservation ordinance and is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan and applicable preservation policies in small area plans adopted by the city council.*

Action 8.1.1 of the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth indicates that the City shall protect historic

resources from modifications that are not sensitive to their historic significance. As conditioned, the project will not modify the building in ways that are insensitive to its historical character, as discussed in item 5 above.

Comprehensive plan policy 8.1 states that the City will, “Preserve, maintain, and designate landmarks, landmarks, and historic resources which serve as reminders of the city's architecture, history, and culture.” As conditioned, the proposed work will help preserve one contributing property within the historic district.

(7) Destruction of any property. Before approving a certificate of appropriateness that involves the destruction, in whole or in part, of any landmark, property in an historic district or nominated property under interim protection, the commission shall make findings that the destruction is necessary to correct an unsafe or dangerous condition on the property, or that there are no reasonable alternatives to the destruction. In determining whether reasonable alternatives exist, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the significance of the property, the integrity of the property and the economic value or usefulness of the existing structure, including its current use, costs of renovation and feasible alternative uses. The commission may delay a final decision for a reasonable period of time to allow parties interested in preserving the property a reasonable opportunity to act to protect it.

The project does not involve the destruction of the property.

Before approving a certificate of appropriateness, and based upon the evidence presented in each application submitted, the commission shall make findings that alterations are proposed in a manner that demonstrates that the Applicant has made adequate consideration of the following documents and regulations:

(8) Adequate consideration of the description and statement of significance in the original nomination upon which designation of the landmark or historic district was based.

The applicant's proposed use of wood and metal materials (permitted by the district design guidelines) for replacement windows on the front of the building, in full view of the public right of way, indicates a sensitivity toward the property's ability to communicate its historical significance. Nevertheless, the proposed window dimensions should more closely match those of their historic counterparts, as conditioned.

(9) Where applicable, Adequate consideration of Title 20 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, Zoning Code, Chapter 530, Site Plan Review.

The proposal does not trigger Site Plan Review required by Zoning Code Chapter 530.

(10) The typology of treatments delineated in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the associated guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, reconstructing, and restoring historic buildings.

As conditioned, the application complies with the rehabilitation guidelines of *the Secretary of the*

Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as discussed in finding #5 above.

Before approving a certificate of appropriateness that involves alterations to a property within an historic district, the commission shall make findings based upon, but not limited to, the following:

(11) The alteration is compatible with and will ensure continued significance and integrity of all contributing properties in the historic district based on the period of significance for which the district was designated.

The project will not authorize changes to other properties within the district.

(12) Granting the certificate of appropriateness will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not negatively alter the essential character of the historic district.

As conditioned, the proposed work will not negatively alter the district's essential character.

(13) The certificate of appropriateness will not be injurious to the significance and integrity of other resources in the historic district and will not impede the normal and orderly preservation of surrounding resources as allowed by regulations in the preservation ordinance.

The request might set a precedent for future cases, but will not formally authorize changes to other Landmarks, Historic Districts, or properties under interim protection without staff or HPC review.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Heritage Preservation Commission adopt the findings above and **approve** the Certificate of Appropriateness to replace windows on the building located at 1721 University Avenue Southeast subject to the following conditions:

1. Glazing shall be clear. Low E and other energy-efficient glazing is acceptable.
2. The proposed screens shall have rail widths, stile widths, and colors that match those of the historic windows.
3. The proposed windows are not approved. The applicant shall install either windows approved for use in the rear addition in November 2012 or windows whose components match the sizes of those in the historic 1/1 wood-frame windows proposed for replacement.
4. If significant deterioration exists in the trim, the trim may be replaced in kind, but shall not be covered with flat aluminum panning.
5. By ordinance, approvals are valid for a period of two years from the date of the decision unless required permits are obtained and the action approval is substantially begun and proceeds in a continuous basis toward completion. Upon written request and for good cause, the planning director may grant up to a one year extension if the request is made in writing no later than December 10, 2015.
6. By ordinance, all approvals granted in this Certificate of Appropriateness shall remain in effect as long as all of the conditions and guarantees of such approvals are observed. Failure to comply with such conditions and guarantees shall constitute a violation of this Certificate of Appropriateness and may result in termination of the approval.
7. CPED Staff shall review and approve the final plans and elevations prior to building permit issuance.

Attachments:

1. Vicinity map (page 12)
2. Plans (page 13-156)
3. Historical photos (page 157-158)
4. Windows approved on rear addition in November 2012 (page 159)